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ABSTRACT

This report describes phonics programs that will increase students' fluency and independent reading skills. The targeted population consisted of second grade students in a growing affluent community and first grade students in a large metropolitan city. The first and second grade students demonstrated a lack of awareness between phonemes and their corresponding graphemes, which made it difficult for them to be independent and fluent readers. Evidence for the existence of the problem was presented in anecdotal records, teacher observations, and surveys. Faculty reported students' inability to sound out alphabet letters and the sounds blends and digraphs make. Third, fourth, and fifth grade teachers reported that struggling students were almost one grade level behind in reading and could not make the transfer of reading skills into the other subject areas. Review of curricular content and instructional strategies revealed a lack of phonetic instruction. A review of solution strategies combined with an analysis of the problem setting resulted in the selection of two major categories of intervention: using "Month-by-Month Phonics" by Patricia Cunningham and the "Saxon Phonics" program by Lorna Simmons. Post intervention data indicated an increase in students' use of phonics skills, an improvement in reading fluently and independently, and an increase in reading for pleasure and enjoyment. (Contains 27 references and 19 figures. Six appendixes contain: the teacher survey; the parent letter; a phoneme/grapheme checklist; Alphabet Letters; a blend/digraph checklist; a Reading Inventory; and a daily log.) (Author/PM)

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Improving Student Reading by Implementing Phonics Programs

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An Action Research Project Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the School of Education in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of Master of Arts in Teaching and Leadership

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ABSTRACT

This report describes phonics programs that will increase students' fluency and independent reading skills. The targeted population consisted of second grade students in a growing affluent community and first grade students in a large metropolitan city. The first and second grade students demonstrated a lack of awareness between phonemes and their corresponding graphemes which made it difficult to be independent and fluent readers. Evidence for the existence of the problem was presented in anecdotal records, teacher observations, and surveys.

Analysis of probable cause data revealed that students lacked phonetic skills, which made it difficult to read grade appropriate material. Students became frustrated and discouraged and were not successful at being fluent or independent readers. Faculty reported students' inability to sound out alphabet letters and the sounds blends and digraphs make. Third, fourth, and fifth grade teachers reported that struggling students were almost one grade level behind in reading and could not make the transfer of reading skills into the other subject areas. Review of curricular content and instructional strategies revealed a lack of phonetic instruction.

A review of solution strategies suggested by knowledgeable others, combined with an analysis of the problem setting, resulted in the selection of two major categories of intervention: using Month-by-Month Phonics by Patricia Cunningham and the Saxon Phonics program by Lorna Simmons.

Post intervention data indicated an increase in students' use of phonics skills, an improvement in reading fluently and independently, and an increase in reading for pleasure and enjoyment.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER 1 – PROBLEM STATEMENT AND CONTEXT.....3

General Statement of the problem.....3

Immediate Problem Context.....3

The Surrounding Community.....3

National Context of the Problem.....9

CHAPTER 2 – PROBLEM DOCUMENTATION.....11

Problem Evidence.....11

Probable Causes.....21

CHAPTER 3 – THE SOLUTION STRATEGY.....28

Literature Review.....28

Project Objectives and Processes.....36

Project Action Plan.....37

Methods of Assessment.....52

CHAPTER 4 – PROJECT RESULTS.....54

Historical Description of the Intervention.....54

Presentation and Analysis of Results.....59

Conclusions and Recommendations.....71

REFERENCES.....75

APPENDICES.....77

CHAPTER 1

PROBLEM STATEMENT AND CONTEXT

General Statement of the Problem

The students of the targeted first and second grade classes demonstrated a lack of awareness of the relationship between phonemes and their corresponding graphemes. Evidence for the existence of the problem was presented in anecdotal records, teacher observations, and surveys.

Immediate Problem Context

The scope of this project involved three elementary schools in two communities. They were designated Sites A, B, and C.

Site A had an enrollment of 352 students. The racial makeup of the school was 89.8% White, 4.5% Hispanic, 4.3% Asian/Pacific Islander and 1.4 % African American. The average yearly attendance based on 180 school days was 94.6%, and the student mobility rate 9.3%.

The average class size in the school was 20 students. The grade levels taught were kindergarten through second grade. The school faculty consisted of 15 classroom teachers and one full-time principal. Other full-time teachers included two speech and language clinicians, one resource and self-contained special education teacher, one learning disability and learning assistance teacher, one foreign language teacher, and two physical/health

education teachers. There were also part-time teachers for music and art. The support staff included a secretary, nurse, custodian, librarian, counselor, social worker, occupational therapist, five lunchroom aides, four special education aides, a library aide, and a technology aide.

The original two-story building was constructed in 1895. It housed kindergarten through high school students. It was remodeled in 1922, when seven new classrooms and a combination auditorium/gymnasium were added. In 1946, a west wing was added that included new classrooms and offices. In 1950, a second story to the 1946 addition was built and six new classrooms were added. In 1982, the building was closed due to decreased enrollment. In 1988, the school was reopened and now houses kindergarten through second grade.

The total school structure consisted of 19 classrooms, a gymnasium, lunchroom, library, computer lab equipped with 22 computers, a speech and language room, a counseling/social work room, a nurse's office and a principal's office. The setting for this school building was in a suburban community.

Additional educational programs available in this building included speech therapy, special education, counseling, social work, and foreign language classes. Programs were provided for learning disabled children, for those needing learning assistance, and those for whom English was a second language. Special activities offered included book picnics, book fairs, field trips, after-school programs, and special assemblies. The faculty communicated regularly with parents by sending home letters, having phone conferences, holding parent/teacher conferences and mailing a monthly newsletter with a calendar of upcoming events.

The school housed children for six and a half-hours a day, or thirty-two and a half-hours a week. Eight hours of that week was spent on language arts, five hours on mathematics, four hours on writing, two and a half hours on spelling, and two hours and forty-five minutes on health, science, or social studies. There was an hour and fifteen minutes of Spanish, two hours and five minutes of physical education, one hour of music, five hours of lunch/recess and forty-five minutes of library, art, and computer lab time.

The total population of the district was 1,100 students. The operating expenditure per pupil in this district was $7,510. The district's student population was comprised of 93.2% White, 2.7% Asian/Pacific Islander, 2.6% Hispanic, and 1.5% African American. The district facilities included a primary building (grades K-2), elementary building (grades 3-5) and a middle school (grades 6-8). Students transferred into a separate district for high school. The district employed 72 teachers with an average of 11.4 years of teaching experience. The percentage of teachers having a Master's degree was 56.8%. The average teacher's salary was $43,668. The average administrator's salary was $104,267.

The community surrounding Site A was a small, residential community located on the shores of a Great Lake. It was 45 minutes away from a major city. The community was known for its open spaces, natural ravines, dramatic bluffs, mature trees, and shoreline. The town included an industrial park. Its diverse housing styles and its historical downtown business district made the community unique. The community's population was about 5,550 with 96.1% being White. The median household income was $151,131 with the average age of the population being 50 years.

The community covered approximately four square miles. It had one primary school, one elementary school, and one middle school. It shared one high school with a neighboring district.

Site B schools pre-kindergarten through eighth grade. The racial makeup of the school was 75.3% Hispanic, 19.7% White, 3.4% Asian/Pacific Islander, and 1.6% African American. The area was low-income. Eighty-four point one percent of the families received public aid. The average yearly attendance based on 180 school days was 94.2% with the truancy rate at 1.9%. The population had a mobility rate of 27.7%.

The school faculty consisted of 68 full-time teachers, 35 full-time aides, one music teacher, an art teacher, and two physical education teachers. There were also two-full time librarians and three security officers. The building had one principal, a vice-principal, and a full-time instructional coordinator who assisted them. There was one full-time counselor, one case-manager, one social worker, and one truant officer. There was also a part-time nurse to aid and assist staff and students.

The original building was built in 1925. The average class size was between 30 to 40 students. The percentage of teachers having a Bachelor's degree was 53.7% and 45.7% had Master's degrees. These teachers had an average of 14.8 years of experience. The racial makeup of the faculty was 44% White, 28% Hispanic, 24% African American, and 4% Asian/Pacific Islander.

The school had recently undergone reconstruction of the main building. An addition had been added that housed 25 classrooms, a lunchroom with a built-in kitchen, a gymnasium, and a resource room. The building had two floors of classrooms. The newer portion contained pre-kindergarten through third grade classrooms while the older part contained fourth through

eighth grades. There was a large auditorium that seated 368 people and two gymnasiums. The school had a computer room complete with Internet access.

There were 1,276 students at this school. One hundred and forty two had been diagnosed with disabilities and 128 received special education services. There were four special education rooms that serviced the children who needed special services. In addition, the school provided after-school programs. There was also a breakfast program that fed between 200 and 500 children daily.

The school housed children for five and a half hours a day or twenty-seven and a half hours a week. Thirteen and two-thirds hours of that week was spent on language arts, four hours on mathematics, and one hour and twenty minutes on both social studies and science. There was sixty-five minutes of art, forty minutes of health and safety and sixty minutes each of physical education, music, and library a week. Many times, physical education, music, library, or computer was bypassed due to staff restrictions and an extensive student population.

Site B was located in a metropolitan area where the schools were clustered into several districts. The population of the district was approximately 421,815. The district was 85.6% low income, and 13.7% limited English proficient. The district was 52.3% African American, 34.4% Hispanic, 9.9% White, 3.2% Asian/Pacific Islander, and 0.3% Native American. Teachers in the district were 45.4% White, 40.6% African American, 11.3% Hispanic, 2.3% Asian / Pacific Islander, and 0.3% Native American. The operative expenditure per student was $7,827. The average teacher's salary was $50,411. The average administrator's salary was $87,703.

The community surrounding Sites B and C was located in a large city. There were several large parks located throughout the community that offered many activities to the neighborhood. Housing was available in a variety of styles ranging from two to three bedroom flats to rehabbed homes. The price of housing ranged from $50,000 to $150,000. The median household income was $42,000. The community's population was 95.2% White, 6.4% Hispanic, 2.6% Asian/Pacific Islander, 0.3% African American, and 0.2% Native American. There were many denominations of religions. The neighborhood was filled with restaurants, theaters, shopping malls, and community parks.

Site C contained pre-kindergarten through eighth grade. The total school population was 138 students. The racial makeup of the school was 76% White, 17.3% Hispanic, 3.6% African American, and 2.8% Asian/Pacific Islander. The average class size was 16 students.

The school faculty consisted of seven full-time classroom teachers, while one teacher served as interim principal. Other staff members included two part-time teachers. One taught math to the eighth graders while the other assumed the interim principal's class for half a day. The support staff included one full-time custodian and a part-time secretary. Three teachers had earned a Master's degree. The average teaching experience among the teachers was 17 years.

The original building housed a church, school, and pastor's home. In 1962, the current building was built. This two-story brick structure contained a kindergarten room, six classrooms, a gymnasium, library, kitchen facilities, and a lower level multipurpose room. Three times a week a lunch program was offered where children could purchase "fun foods" (i.e., taco in a bag, hamburgers, or hot dogs). The Parent Teacher League provided this lunch

program. The multipurpose room was used for extended childcare in the mornings and after school.

The school housed children for six and a half hours a day or thirty-two and a half hours a week. Seven and a half hours were spent on language arts, two hours on religion, and a half hour was spent on art and music. Two hours was spent on science and social studies, six and a fourth hours on mathematics and two and a half hours was spent on physical education.

The educational programs available in this building included athletic sports teams, music lessons, band, and 23 computers shared in all the classrooms. Special activities included Pizza Hut Book-It Program, Read to Succeed Program, and Parent Teacher League Fun Fairs.

The total population of the district was 2,213 students. This population was comprised of 268 pre-school students and 1,909 students attending kindergarten through eighth grade. The district was made up of private parochial schools within a large metropolitan area. There were several fund-raising groups in the district that raised money to keep the schools running and repaired. The average teacher's salary was $27,000. The average administrator's salary was $40,000. Site C was in the same community as Site B.

National Context of the Problem

The lack of phonemic and graphemic awareness was a concern that was prevalent in classrooms throughout America. Phonemic awareness (i.e., awareness of the sounds that comprise speech) was the first critical element of correct encoding, while graphemic awareness (i.e., awareness that letters or letter combinations correspond to speech sounds) was equally important. Understanding of both was necessary for the decoding of words. The phoneme helps the reader pronounce the word while the grapheme tells the reader what the word is.

The English alphabet has a sound/symbol relationship. The 26 letters of our alphabet, singly and in some set combinations, are used to write the elementary sounds of English speech. There are 42 pure sounds and 27 rules that are associated with those sounds (McCullock, 2000).

However, there is more to phonics than matching sounds to symbols. A student's visual memory is an important component in order for phonics training to be effective. Children, who can use phonics to read and the sounds of letters to spell more than likely have a well-developed visual memory. They are able to look at a page of text and create mental pictures that represent the ideas, letters, and words that are in print (Mandel, 1988).

To teach students to listen, hear, and say sounds correctly, a child has to be instructed. Then he must visualize, read, and write each letter or letters, thus, "tapping" into four primary senses: sight, sound, voice, and touch. This addresses many learning styles.

The question to teach or not to teach phonics has been a continuous debate since the 1960's. Phonics instruction is a necessary and important part of teaching students to read and write. A realistic problem that needs to be addressed is the lack of phonics instruction in schools today. This problem exists at the national, state, and local levels.

CHAPTER 2

PROBLEM DOCUMENTATION

Problem Evidence

The students of the targeted first and second grade classes exhibited a lack of awareness of the relationship between phonemes and their corresponding graphemes. Evidence of the problem was shown through several methods of data collecting, including teacher surveys, parent surveys, phoneme/grapheme checklists, and blend/digraph checklists.

This data collecting process took place between September 1 and September 15, 2001. Teachers of first through fifth grade were surveyed about their students who struggle with reading. (Appendix A) The parent survey asked parents about their children's knowledge of letter names, vowel sounds, and consonant sounds. (Appendix B) The phoneme/grapheme checklists and blend/digraph checklists provided data on students' knowledge of letter names, letter sounds, blends, and digraphs prior to being taught. (Appendix C and D)

Of the 43 teachers invited to take part in the survey, 25 responded. Each teacher answered six questions about their students who struggle with reading. The survey (Appendix A) was developed by researchers to discover what needs were not currently

being met in the targeted schools' reading/phonics programs. A summary of this survey is shown in Figure 1.

Figure 1

Results of Teacher Survey, Pre-Intervention.

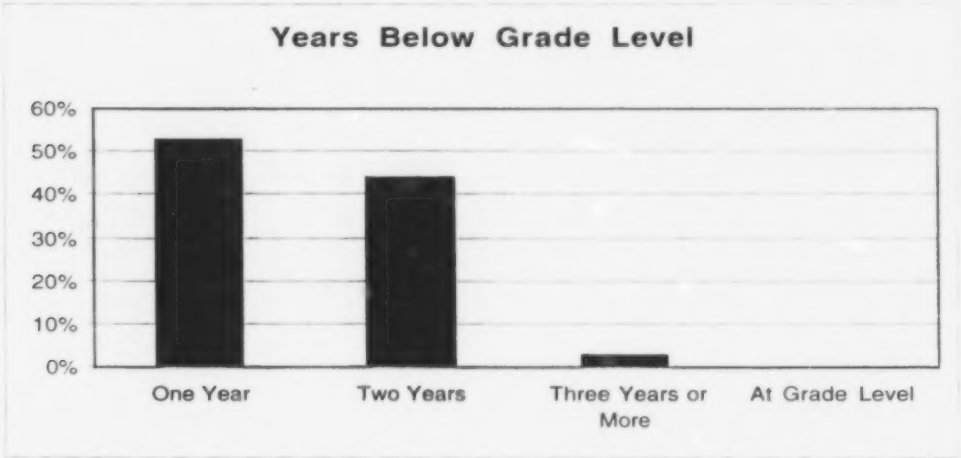


Figure 1 represents question one of the teacher survey . It asked teachers how many years below grade level their struggling readers were. Of the teachers surveyed 53% were one year below grade level, 44% were two years below grade level, and 3% of their struggling readers were three years or more below grade level. Their were no struggling readers at grade level.

Figure 2

Results of Teacher Survey, Pre-Intervention

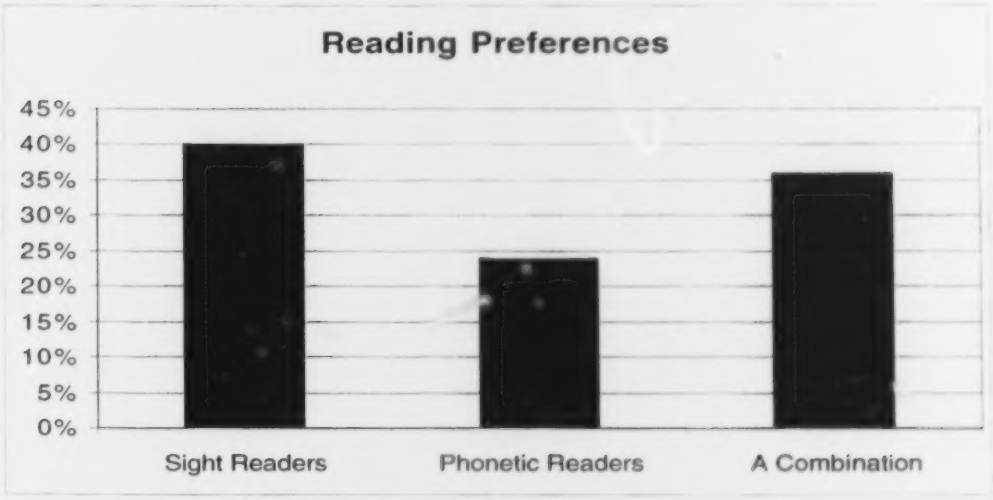


Figure 2 represents question two of the teacher survey. It asked teachers if the majority of their students were sight readers, phonetic readers, or a combination of both. Of the teachers surveyed, 40% were sight readers, 24% were phonetic readers, and 36% were a combination of both phonetic and sight readers.

Figure 3

Results of Teacher Survey, Pre-Intervention

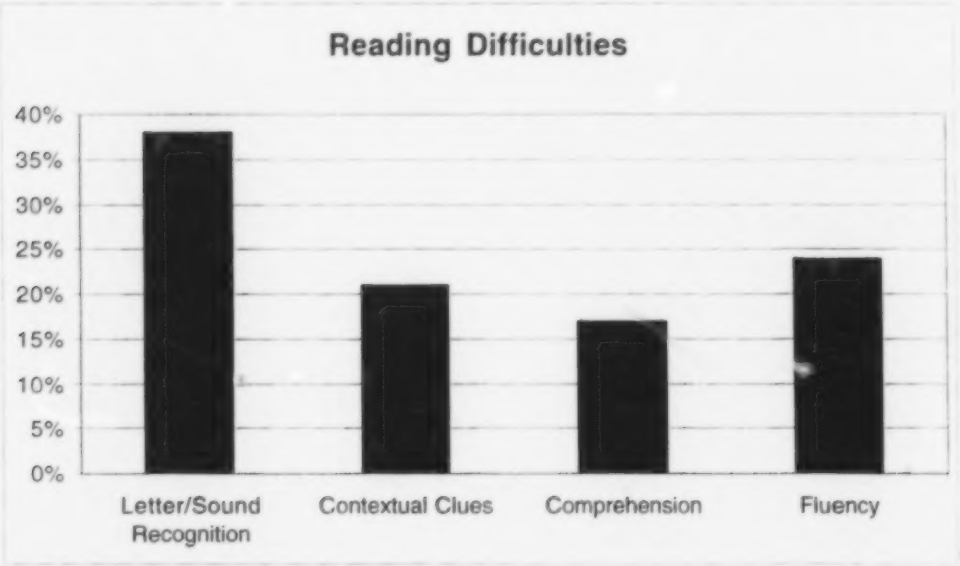


Figure 3 represents question 3 of the teacher survey. It asked teachers what their students struggle with the most in reading. Of the teachers surveyed, 38% of their students had difficulty with letter/sound recognition, 24% had difficulty with fluency, 21% had difficutly with contextal clues, and 17% had difficulty comprehending text.

Figure 4

Results of Teacher Survey, Pre-Intervention.

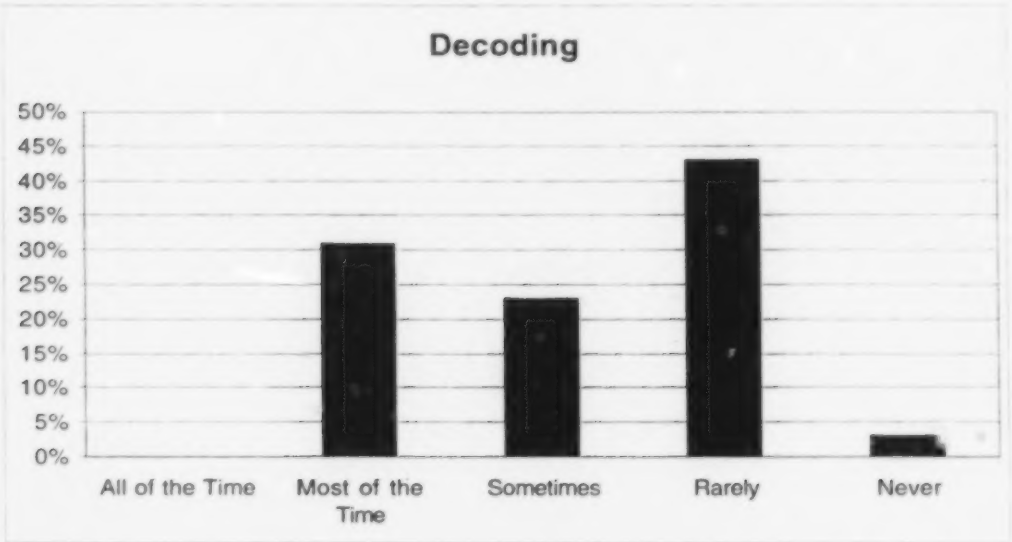


Figure 4 represents question four of the teacher survey. It asked teachers if their struggling readers could attack new words by using decoding strategies. Of the teachers surveyed, 43% of their students rarely used decoding strategies, 31% used decoding strategies most of the time, 23% sometimes used decoding strategies, and 3% never attacked new words by using decoding strategies. There were no students who used decoding strategies all of the time.

Figure 5

Results of Teacher Survey, Pre-Intervention

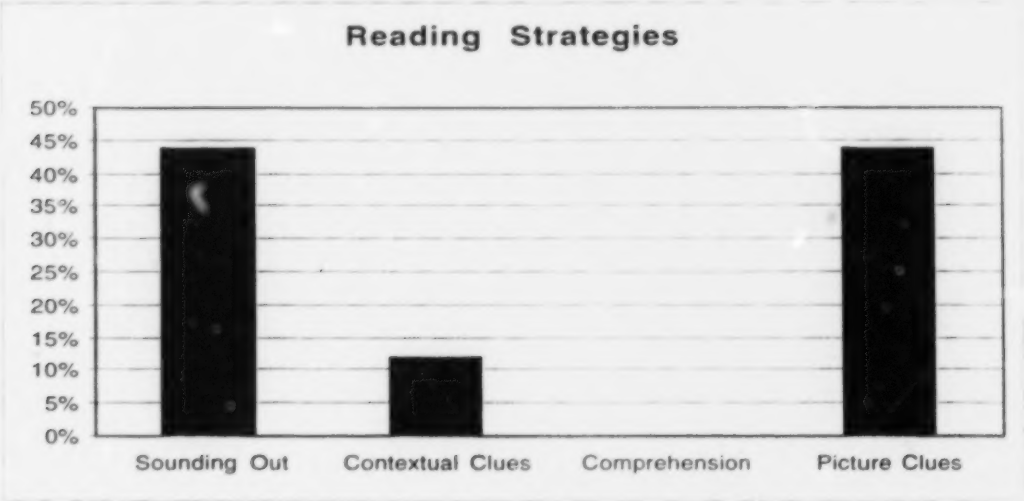


Figure 5 represents question five of the teacher survey. It asked teachers what decoding strategies they observe their students using the most in reading. Of the teachers surveyed, 44% of their students sounded out words they did not know, 44% used picture clues to decode words they did not know, and 12% used contextual clues to decode words they did not know. There was no recording of comprehension strategies being used to decode words.

Figure 6

Results of Teacher Survey, Pre-Intervention

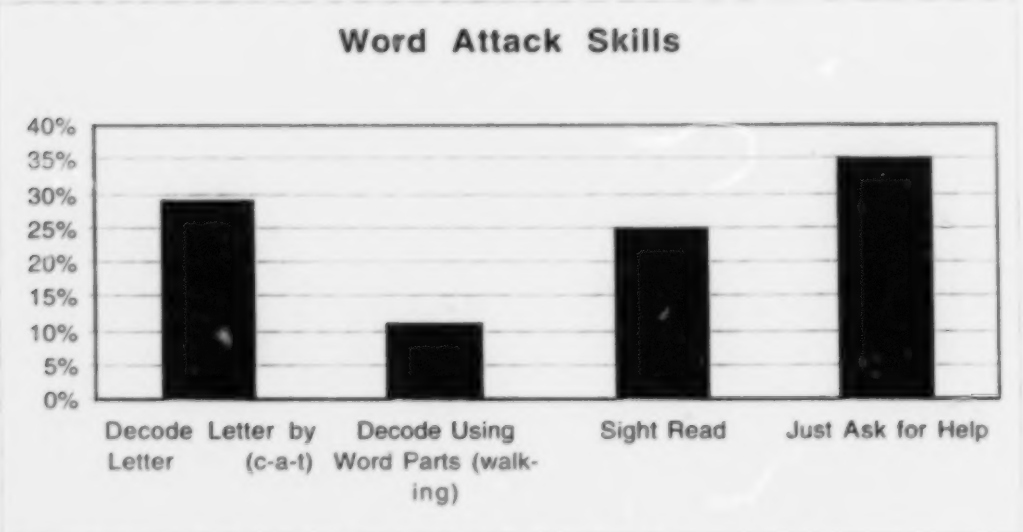


Figure 6 represents question 6 of the teacher survey. It asked teachers if their struggling readers mostly decoded letter by letter (c-a-t), used word parts (walk – ing), sight read, or just asked for help. Of the teachers surveyed, 35% of their students just asked for help, 29% decoded letter by letter, 25% sight read, and 11% decoded using word parts.

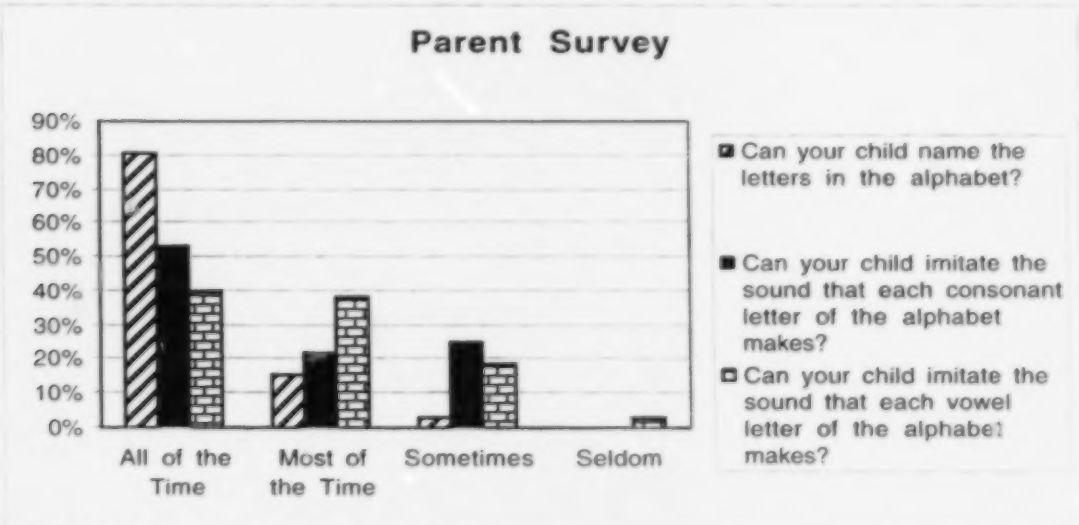
From these surveys, the researchers discovered that most students who struggle with reading are one to two years below grade level in their reading development, that most of these students are sight readers, and that students struggle most with letter/sound recognition. The results also showed that struggling students were rarely able to attack new words by decoding; yet, teachers reported that the strategies students used most often when reading new text were sounding out and picture clues.

Finally, teachers reported that struggling readers most often asked someone else for help when they came to a word they did not know.

The researchers' next step was to ask parents their opinion of their child's letter/sound recognition. This helped the researchers discover how well parents perceived their children's reading skill level. The parents were asked several questions about their children; however, only three of these questions were used in the research (Appendix B). Questions were used that related to phoneme/grapheme awareness. Parents were asked if their children could name the letters in the alphabet. They were also asked if their children could produce the sounds of each consonant and vowel in the alphabet. Figure 7 represents the results of the parent survey.

Figure 7

Results of Parent Survey, Pre-Intervention.



Of the parents surveyed, when asked if their child could name the letters in the alphabet, 81% of parents said their child could name the letters in the alphabet all of

the time, 16% of parents said most of the time, and 3% of parents said sometimes. When asked if their child could imitate the sound each consonant letter makes, 53% said all of the time, 25% said sometimes, and 22% said most of the time. When asked if their child could imitate the sound each vowel makes, 40% said all of the time, 38% said most of the time, 19% said sometimes, and 3% said seldom.

Most parents thought their children could name the letters of the alphabet and produce the sound that each consonant letter makes all of the time. Most parents thought their children could produce the sound that each vowel letter makes most of the time. Vowel sounds seemed to give their children the most trouble, according to the parents surveyed.

Finally, the researchers assessed the targeted students. Researchers initially tested each child on phoneme/grapheme awareness. They wanted to see how well the children knew letter names and sounds. The researchers then administered the phoneme/grapheme checklist to each student. (Appendix C) They first asked the students to name a letter of the alphabet and then asked the students to produce the sound that that letter made. This testing continued until each letter name and sound was assessed. The results of the phoneme/grapheme checklists are represented in figures 8 and 9.

Figure 8

Results of Phoneme/Grapheme Checklist, Pre-Intervention.

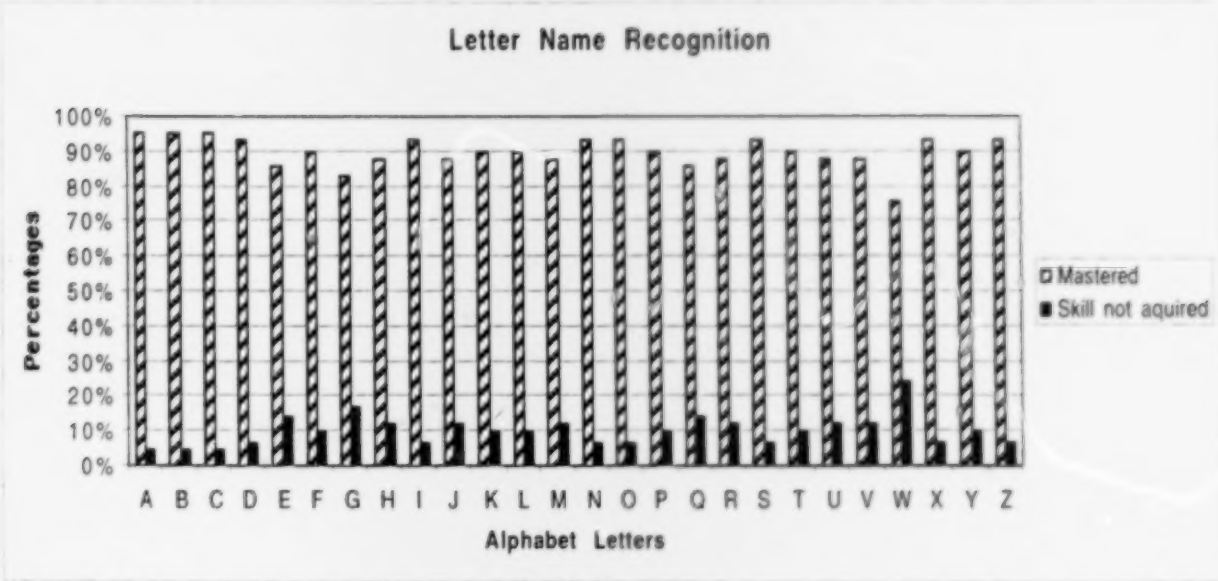
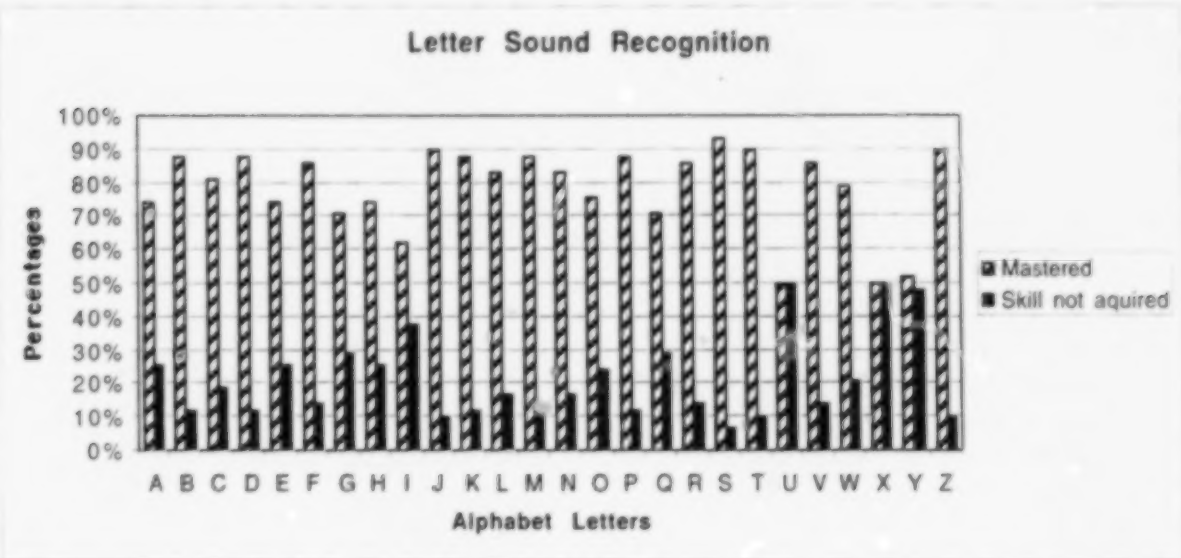


Figure 9

Results of Phoneme/Grapheme Checklist, Pre-Intervention.



Of the students surveyed, vowel sounds gave them the most trouble. They were also unable to produce the sounds of the letters of the alphabet infrequently used such as "y" and "z".

Probable Causes

The causes of the problems facing the targeted first and second grade students could be found in a variety of high risk factors such as lack of parental involvement, social- economic status, and individual teaching methods.

According to Dwyer (1997), high-risk children who live in low income, impoverished neighborhoods are at the highest risk for developing poor reading skills. These children are often given inferior educational opportunities. Since parents of these students have to work long hours to provide for their families, there are extra stressors at home and less time devoted to the educational needs of children. By the

age of three, students often fall behind in language development and the subsequent high school dropout rate is double that of students not facing these high-risk factors. Dwyer notes that teachers facing the greatest challenges are those who teach in neighborhoods where poverty is met with crime and violence.

This sparks a debate of a different nature. Phonics instruction is not as high a priority in well-to-do neighborhoods. In these neighborhoods, children have exposure to preschool academics; they have parents who have more time, skills, and/or money to ensure academic success. They take their children to places where experiential learning takes place incidentally. These parents can afford to travel and visit museums. They also read more to their children, and the children receive an early head start with learning. Because these children develop better language skills, they do not need the same kind of intensive phonetic instruction that inner city children need. Inner city children more frequently come from bilingual families where English is the second language and may not be spoken at home. This contributes to a delay in learning to read (Dwyer 1997).

Lyon (1998) professes how scientific research supports the idea that learning to read is not a natural process and learning to read is critical to a child's well-being. If a child does not learn to read in our literary society, hope for a productive and financially secure future diminishes. Many poor readers have not had the chance to engage in language play, which develops an awareness of sound and language patterns. They also have limited opportunities to read aloud with adults. These experiences are common for children raised with limited English proficiency and for

children whose parents have reading levels that are low. Children with speech/language and hearing deficiencies are also at risk for reading failure.

Teachers who use limited strategies and focus on a narrow range of ability levels will produce poorer readers. Their students will have difficulty understanding important concepts presented in written form. This could lead to significant gaps in learning and push the lower achieving students far behind their peers. Concern among teachers is that there is not a consistent curriculum or standard to be followed among schools, districts, and states. Within school systems, teachers are divided as to the importance of phonics and its contribution to a successful reading program. Undergraduate reading courses are not teaching the importance of phonics and phonetic awareness. Because of this, teachers feel inadequately prepared to teach effective phonics in the classroom. In one survey, teachers of third and fourth grade youngsters were asked if their students were prepared to read independently. The teachers replied that students were not sufficiently prepared to handle the phonics rules at their grade levels. Reteaching and reinforcement had to be done before grade level rules could be taught, thus strengthening the ability to read independently (Lyon,1998).

Greenberg (1998) cites many ways that school administration contributes to the inadequacies of reading programs. He says that teachers are hampered in their attempts to teach a balanced program. First, administrators often look at standardized test results to judge the effectiveness of reading programs. These standardized tests are easier to graph and cheaper to grade than tests that are more comprehensive. Secondly, teachers also cite a lack of support from their administrators who fail to

provide age appropriate, award-winning books for their classrooms and school libraries. Also, administrators who insist that their teachers adhere to tight and/or fragmented schedules further contribute to ineffective reading programs. They leave no time for language and literacy-rich reading projects. Finally, he says, time needed for weekly staff meetings so that teachers can meet with other teachers and reading specialists for program planning is often denied.

Groff (1998) states that teachers are using an "integrated balanced" approach to reading instruction that was introduced by Flood and Lapp. Most of the instruction time is spent in developing students' listening skills. A story is read three times to the students. Each time the story is read, a different skill is introduced. Students might make predictions about the story, or listen and then find special words that were targeted in the story. Lapp and Flood have indicated that enough attention to word recognition and phonics is given in the lesson. Groff (1998) contends that this is not enough instruction in phonics, and students come away from the lesson confused about word meanings and letter sounds. Kolstand and Bardwell (1997) warn that teachers are inadequately trained to teach competently in whole language or phonics instruction. Many schools do not use funds to train their teachers. Teachers lack training in children's literature when using phonics and whole language. Only one course in children's literature is usually offered in undergraduate college programs. When teachers have inadequate professional training, they turn to the step-by-step instructions of textbook publishers who do not address all of the skills needed to produce competent readers.

Researchers have found factors that hinder children's ability to successfully decode words. A student's visual memory is important for learning phonics (Glazer, 1998). Students with poor visual memories, have a difficult time holding an image in their minds, and, as a result, are poor spellers and decoders of words. Inconsistencies in the English language also contribute to phonics failures. The twenty-six letters in the alphabet do not represent the sounds of the spoken language, making it difficult for students to decode words.

A lack of congruency between instruction and textbooks leads to confusion in decoding words (Stein, Johnson, and Gutlohn, 1999). Words containing sounds not yet taught are frequently present in textbooks, especially in content areas, making it difficult for students to decode the words within. Not all sounds of a word are taught in a sequential order. If the first and last sounds have been learned but not the middle sound, the word becomes difficult to read only because the student has not been taught all the skills needed. Students need to have all the skills taught before they can be expected to put everything together and read.

Phonics instruction needs to be taught in a sequential manner. According to Wright (2001), students can make gains from instruction that is systematically presented and linguistically sound. This is evident with long vowel combinations, diphthongs, and digraphs—oo, oa, ow ,and ou. These become confusing and need to be practiced until they are mastered. Children need to be taught the structure of the spoken word as well as the written language and how the sounds of the alphabet represent words. This is essential for spelling, reading, and writing. Incorrect spelling patterns become a habit when the language is unknown. Teachers need to focus on syllables, vowels,

consonants, blends, and common sound patterns. All of these unlock words and the relationships shared among the different skills.

Research is beginning to show that the lack of skills in phonemic awareness is causing reading and spelling delays. Smith (1998) claims that phonemic awareness is a powerful predictor of reading success. Children who have mastered segmenting words into individual sounds will be able to quicken their reading progress. Students also must be proficient in the ability to analyze, sequence, and remember individual sounds that create a word. There are many reading programs that do not teach all of these skills effectively.

The researchers in Sites A, B and C have observed several of the same causes for the lack of the awareness of the relationship between phonemes and their corresponding graphemes. Evidence of the problem has been observed in many ways. First, teachers in the researchers' schools displayed frustration when teaching students who were below grade level in reading. They felt that their students did not use decoding strategies when reading text. The teachers were frustrated because they did not know how to help these students improve their reading skills.

In addition, the students in the researchers' schools seemed frustrated because they lacked the knowledge or skills to decode words they did not know. Because of this, struggling reader's self-confidence seemed lower than that of more fluent readers. Consequently, these students did not attempt grade level tasks needed to move on the next grade.

There also was not a uniform method to teach phonics in the researcher's schools. Each teacher has a different approach and vocabulary used to teach phonics in the

classroom. As the students move from classroom to classroom they had to learn a whole new vocabulary to function.

Lastly, the researchers felt that there were not adequate assessments that told them where each child really was in their reading and spelling programs. Because of this, students were not receiving the support needed to improve their reading skills.

CHAPTER 3

THE SOLUTION STRATEGY

Literature Review

American schools have used two major approaches for teaching children how to read. Each approach stems from two powerful schools of thought. Conventional curriculum represents a time-honored reliance on phonics. The second approach embraces whole language.

Traditional learning in the United States began with mass schooling in the 19th century. Then, children learned to read by making letter-sound associations. They progressed from single letters, to syllables, to blends, to words, to sentences. This decoding process enabled them to use symbols to suggest a picture or an idea, which is, of course, reading. The problem with this approach is that less than 45% of English words can be successfully decoded by the one letter/ one sound association. The language is too irregular and the phonics approach falls short when teaching many children to read (Ornstein and Levine, 1993).

Whole language is a term used to describe a different approach to teaching reading. In whole language, stress is placed on using language in ways that relate to everyday life. Dahl and Scharer (2000) describe whole language as programs based on literature, comprehension, questioning and process centered instruction. This is the range of whole language:

1. Whole language is a child-centered curriculum. The classroom program is focused on children and their patterns of literacy development and interests. Instruction addresses the child's process of reading and writing.
2. Whole language is a teaching approach. Reading and writing is taught as meaning centered processes through experiences connected with the text. Learning happens from whole to part rather than part to whole. This means that the child gains phonics skills as they read rather than being taught the skills first before reading the text. Instruction includes teacher demonstration.
3. Whole language provides materials. A wide selection of children's literature is used and books written by children are available. Children choose their own books to read as well as their own writing topics.
4. The whole language classroom is a literate environment where reading and writing are used as tools for learning and problem solving. There are sustained times where children choose books to read and then write connected text.
5. Children in whole language classrooms work in cooperative groups when they work on reading and writing projects and exchange ideas and information. These cooperative learning groups are considered vital to the learning process.

There has been a huge debate for over a century now, over whole language, phonetic instruction and how to combine both. During colonial times, children were taught the relationship between letters and sounds and told to read. The method was not challenged until the reformer, Horace Mann, criticized these teaching methods. He told the Massachusetts Board of Education that the letters of the alphabet were "skeleton-shaped, bloodless, ghostly, apparitions." (Dahl and Scharer, 2000) Mann felt that instead of teaching individual

sound/letter relationships that children should focus on comprehension by learning whole words first. John Dewey agreed with Mann and this became known as the look-say approach. Another researcher, Flesch, did not agree with the look/say technique or comprehension of whole words first. He felt that the children would not learn to read because they would have to learn word by word by word. He said, for example, that if we wanted children to learn 10,000 or even 20,000 words that they would have to learn or memorize each of these words separately. Thus his famous quote, "We have thrown 3,500 years of civilization out the window and have gone back to the age of Hammurabi." comparing this way of teaching to trying to learn Chinese symbols. (Dahl and Scharer, 2000)

Flesch's critique of Mann and Dewey was not very popular but sparked the curiosity of Jeanne Chall of the Harvard Graduate School of Education. She conducted a three year study and a literature review where she published the results in the educational magazine Learning to Read. Her famous article is called "The Great Debate" (1967). This article is still widely read among educators and educational researchers. In this article she stated that the code-emphasis approach was especially necessary and helpful for economically challenged children. She believed that it was equally advantageous for children who were low-average readers and for those who had reading difficulties such as dyslexia.

This article was updated in 1983 and showed even stronger needs for phonics-first instruction. Chall felt that even in the late 1930's when the Dick and Jane series, produced by Scott Foresman, came out, that it was only the first in a fad of meaning-first approaches. These readers were designed to teach children to read by learning simple words rather than repeating sounds.

The debate then turned to whole language where the student is immersed in real books and writing. The whole language approach centers around children figuring out words by seeing them in context and skipping over unfamiliar words. Overall understanding is the goal, not word accuracy. The problem with this ideology is that often students miss too many words to get intended meaning from the text. (Palmaffy, 1997)

Studies have shown that phonics is taught only informally in a number of early childhood classrooms. Interestingly, the study by Tracey and Morrow found that teachers in K-3 classrooms used more phonics instruction and more commercially prepared material than the preschool teachers surveyed. Worksheets were the materials used most by teachers in K-2 grades. Preschool phonics instruction was mostly in context and spontaneous, thus introducing the children to letter/sound correspondence while they were looking at a specific book. Most preschool teachers didn't even realize they were teaching phonics. It was just a natural process. As for kindergarten, first, and second grade teachers, they were formally teaching phonics. It was a part of their curriculum. As children progressed through the grades, the teaching of phonics became more explicit and less contextual during these formative years. Combining an explicit and contextual approach was not observed frequently. It was either one or the other. When Tracey and Morrow finished their study, they came up with some conclusions. Research indicated that a strong foundation in letter-sound relationships is imperative to success in reading and writing development. However, they haven't determined yet whether explicit, contextual, or a combined instruction helps children's reading achievement. Tracey and Morrow believe that teachers should make a conscious effort to examine and reflect upon their own strategies. They should select the best type for children to learn (Morrow & Tracey, 1997).

Laura Robb (1997) suggests a word study strategy by building, what is called a thematic "word wall." Children are instructed to pick out theme-related words from books read and to post them on classroom walls. Together, the teacher and students find word patterns and sort the words by particular sounds. Robb has teachers use the word wall to provide the children with several strategies for improving reading. These activities build students' vocabulary and reinforce their knowledge of phonics and spelling patterns. One of the activities is "word mapping." In word mapping, students collect words and phrases about topics or themes and create groupings and categories out of the words collected. The children then orally explain the thinking process that goes into making these particular groupings and category names. Using a word map, the teacher can help students study spelling patterns and understand how a suffix or prefix can alter a word's meaning. Children can study vowel sounds and create their own words using a given sound. Diane Snowball (1997) has found through her research that children learn through repetition, rhyming, singing, and exploring sounds. She, too, recommends word walls, in which children group words they have learned that contain the same sounds. Children can look for word patterns and build on word families, which improves their knowledge of reading and writing.

According to Smith (1998), studies have shown that children who are weak in phonetic awareness and who receive instruction in phonics improve in reading, spelling, letter sound associations and word learning. Long-term studies that have followed children who received phonetic instruction suggest that reading and spelling gains were maintained over two to four years after the initial instruction was given.

Moustafa and Colon (1999), discuss how to best teach letter/sound correspondence in beginning reading. Some say it should be a phonics approach while others believe it should

be a whole language approach. The Moustafa/Colon approach combines the use of phonics and whole language as a means for teaching beginning reading. Their whole-to-part instruction is based on several principles:

1. The first printed words children learn to recognize are read holistically, not letter by letter.
2. Early readers read better in context than outside of context.
3. Early readers comprehend print written with familiar language better than print written in unfamiliar language.

This approach teaches letter-sound correspondence in a meaningful context by building upon the spoken language children already understand, rather than only letter-sound correspondences. It teaches the parts of the words after the story has been read to the children, with the children, and by the children. The new approach uses print words children have learned to recognize through shared reading rather than using print words children may not recognize. Letter-sound correspondence is taught using units of spoken language familiar to children (on-sets, rhymes, and syllables) rather than units of speech unfamiliar to the children (Moustaffa and Colon 1999).

Whole-to-parts phonics instruction is an instructional strategy that addresses both the traditional phonics method and the whole language approach. It tries to address the limitations in both to make a better reading program.

The National Institute of Child Health and Human Development conducted and supported its own research in reading. They believe that a child's ability to read is critical to his overall well being and health. Thus, since 1980 they have conducted their own fifteen year scientific study which holds the premise that learning to read is not a natural process. Instead they

found in their research that there must be an emphasis on phonemic awareness and phonics. Their research proved that for many children decoding, word recognition, and reading comprehension must be taught directly and systematically. Their research strongly suggested that:

1. Pre-school children benefit from having books read to them.
2. Kindergarten children should be introduced to print concepts and be familiar with the purposes for reading and writing. They should also be developing age-appropriate vocabularies, language, comprehension skills, and familiarity with language structure.
3. First and second grade children require explicit instruction to develop necessary phonemic awareness, phonics, spelling, and reading comprehension skills.

These researchers understand that some still believe that reading is a natural activity. To this, they challenge the disbeliever to try a new approach. They believe children will benefit if they do (Lyon, 1998).

Hempenstall (2001) stated that there are essentially two approaches to teaching phonics that influence what is taught. He called them implicit and explicit phonics instruction. The explicit instruction is where students learn the associations between the letters and their sounds. The implicit phonics instruction is where the students break down the whole word to its parts. Students are expected to induce or guess the word from the word's structure based on other words they have already learned. The teacher might present other words with similar sounds, but never is an isolated sound presented.

There are also two approaches to the instructional process. In the first approach, attention is given to the teaching method. Instruction is based on skills taught to the student and then sequencing these skills for the student. It also usually involves practice of these skills, and

continuous evaluation of progress. The other approach to instruction is discovery based where the responsibility is shifted to the student for making use of phonic cues and contextual clues. The latter instruction is used more in whole language classrooms where phonics is not accepted outside the context of stories. For the struggling reader, these whole to part or whole language programs are not sufficient because the students do not have enough background experience nor have they had opportunities to grasp learning to read in this way. At risk students require careful systematic instruction in individual letter/sound correspondences, and developing them will require teachers to isolate the phoneme from the word. These students will also need consistent practice of these sounds in isolation from stories if they are to build their memory of each sound/symbol relationship.

In Hempenstalls study (2001) like that of Lyons study (1998) he states that the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development found through collating over 100 researchers' findings, that children who lack awareness of the sound structure of words become poor readers. This problem for the child can not be resolved with age unless intervention, which is systematic and structured, occurs. Of children who struggle in their first year of reading, 90% will be struggling in their fourth year of reading. If they are struggling in their third year of learning to read, 75% will be struggling in their ninth year of reading. Children who are poor readers also make greater use of contextual and picture clues than do better readers. Scientific research demonstrates that the single most effective approach for students to learn to read is to be taught intensive phonics. To achieve this students need a decodable text in the classroom where they can really manage the content and sequence of the new phonics program. The story text must correspond with the phonics program being taught.

Dahl and Sharer (2000) concluded that, although instruction varied across classrooms, three characteristics emerged as phonics was taught in whole language classrooms. First, teachers assessed and responded to the individual needs of learners. Teachers' decisions during individual reading and writing sessions showed that they recognized and understood their students' needs. Secondly, phonics skills were taught in the context of meaningful reading and writing activities to maximize the application of phonics. The phonics strategies taught helped children to develop skills in which they could transfer and apply the phonics concepts as they were introduced to new words. Much like other programs, this one advocated independence in exploring words and word patterns. Finally, an effective reading program requires that teachers recognize multiple goals for reading instruction and must figure out how to reach these goals. This is a challenge teachers face every day, always evaluating what skills their students have, what their students' goals are, and how reading instruction can be directed toward all their students goals.

Project Objectives and Processes

As a result of increased emphasis on phonetic instruction, during the period of September 2001 to January 2002, the targeted first and second grade students will increase their abilities to decode and transfer any word in reading and spelling. This will be measured by administering teacher-constructed checklists and commercially-made and teacher-made assessments.

In order to accomplish the project objective, the following processes are necessary:

1. Collecting student data, using teacher-made checklists, commercially-made assessments, and teacher-made assessments
2. Teaching lessons which incorporate phonics

3. Collecting data from teacher surveys regarding students' phonetic knowledge
4. Keeping a weekly log stating accomplishments and set backs
5. Informal observations made by the teacher

Project Action Plan

During each week of the sixteen week intervention period, the targeted classrooms will teach two multi-level phonics programs. Each targeted grade level will follow the general action plan outlines listed below. Site A will use action plan outline A while Sites B and C will use action plan outline B. See Appendices A, B, C, D and E for specific checklists, surveys, and assessments.

Action Plan Outline A

A. Week 1
    a. Teacher survey given to faculty members of grades 1-5. (Appendix A)
    b. Parent survey sent home to parents. (Appendix B)
    c. Initial phoneme/grapheme checklist given one on one to individual students. (Appendix C)
    d. Initial blend/digraph checklist given one on one to individual students. (Appendix D)
    e. Initial reading inventory given to individual students to find what guided reading level each student was on. (Appendix E)

B. Week 2
    a. Introduce "name cheers" activity. Select 5 children each day to cheer for. Then ask each child to come up and leads his or her own cheer. Children point to each letter in their name and say something like "Give me an S", "Give me a T"

and so on. After their cheers are finished the children put their names up on the word wall.

b. Introduce children to the classroom "word wall". Important words are displayed on a word wall. The first words to go on the word wall are student names. Add 5 student names to the word wall each day until all of the class is up.

c. Implement a Making Words lesson. Teacher gives children particular letters to make words. She first has them make little words and then bigger words until a final word is made. The final word always includes all of the letters they have.

C. Week 3

a. Review long and short vowel sounds using students' names. Say a sound –not a letter name- and have all the children whose names have that sound stand up.

b. Clap syllables in students' names. The teacher says each students' name and has everyone clap the beats in that name as they say it with you.

c. Introduce rhyming words using students' names. First, call on students whose names have a lot of rhyming words. Say a word that rhymes with one of the names of a student in your class. Finally have students say the word along with the name of the rhyming child.

d. Make alphabet banner using consonant letters, common blends, consonant digraphs and c (s), g (j). Children's names are the first to be put on the banner. Use a roll of bulletin board paper to make the banner. Under the headings, write the names of every student whose name starts with those beginning sounds. Some headings will not have anything under them. Brainstorm with your

students the names of famous people that begin with the letters or blends not used so that every letter or blend has at least one key name displayed with it.

D. Week 4

a. Make vowel posters using students' names. Use poster board to make a chart for each vowel. On each poster board list all your students names that contain that vowel. Highlight the vowel in each name that is the same as the vowel heading in that column. Read the names on the posters together emphasizing the sound of the highlighted vowel.

b. Put the first five high frequency words on the word wall. Choose words that are frequently misspelled in children's writing. Call out the five words, one at a time, using each one in a sentence. As each word is called out, children locate the word on the word wall and keep their eyes on it. After the word is said the children chant and clap out each letter in the word ("S-A-I-D – said!"). The children write each word after it has been cheered for.

c. Children make an ABC book using common blends, digraphs, and c (s), g (j). Children make these books in groups of three. The class works on a few pages each day, so that by the end of the first or second month of school each child has a picture dictionary to use when writing. Children choose the words themselves and draw pictures to go with those words.

E. Week 5

a. Practice then add five new high frequency words to the word wall. Refer to the directions in week four, activity b.

b. Continue working on ABC books. Refer to direction in week four, activity c.

c. Introduce a "round up the rhymes" activity. Begin talking about spelling patterns. Read a story or poem with a lot of rhyming words. Call the children's attention to the rhyming words. As each page is read encourage the children to listen for the rhymes as you say them. As children identify the rhyming words write them on index cards and put them in a pocket chart. Some of the rhyming words will have the same spelling pattern and some will not. When all of the words are displayed have the children help cross out or discard rhyming pairs without the same spelling pattern. Now, the pocket chart only contains words that have the same spelling pattern. Write a new word that rhymes with the round-up-rhymes and show it to the children. Have them put the new word next to the rhyming pair that helped them figure out the new word.

d. Introduce "guess the covered word" activity. Children begin to learn how to figure out what would "make sense" when they come to an unknown word in a sentence using context clues. Cover up one word in a sentence using self-adhesive notes. First have children guess the word with no letters of that word showing. Next, pull off the self-adhesive note so that the first letter(s) up to the vowel are revealed. Children now take additional guesses. Finally the whole word is revealed. Help children confirm which guesses made sense and had the correct beginning sound(s).

F. Week 6

a. Practice then add five new high frequency words to the word wall. Refer to directions in week four, activity b.

b. Introduce an "on-the-back" activity. The activity is so named because students do the activity on the back of the paper they write their word wall words on. In this particular activity children work with word wall words that have the same spelling patterns. For example **went** is one of their word wall words. Tell the students how went is a helpful word that can help them spell many other words. The student underline the **ent** in went. Now that they know the spelling pattern they are able to spell many other words like tent, rent, sent, Brent, and spent. The students are told that these are words they should be able to spell correctly because went is on the word wall. This "on the back" rhyming activity can be done with word wall words that have spelling patterns that will help children spell a lot of rhyming words.

c. Implement a Making Words lesson. Refer to directions in week two, activity c.

d. Present a new "rounding up the rhymes" activity. Refer to direction in week five, activity d.

G. Week 7

a. Practice then add five new high frequency words to the word wall. Refer to directions in week four, activity b.

b. Present a new "guess the covered word" activity. Refer to directions in week five, activity d.

c. Implement a Making Words lesson. Refer to directions in week two, activity c.

d. Begin "coaching" during reading activities. Encourage children to use the strategies they have learned to help them read text. Instruction is more effective when children are lead through the steps to read a new word at the exact moment

they encounter a word they do not know. Some strategies children can use are the following:

1. Put a finger on a word and say all of the letters.
2. Use letter and picture clues.
3. Try to pronounce a word by looking to see if it has a spelling pattern or rhyme that is known.
4. Keep a finger on a word and read the other words in the sentence to see if it makes sense.
5. If it doesn't make sense, go back to the word and think about what would make sense and have these parts.

H. Week 8

a. Practice then add five new high frequency words on the word wall. Refer to directions in week four activity b.

b. Introduce "changing a hen to a fox" activity. Students demonstrate how much they know about letter sounds on paper. First, ask the children if they can hear the beginning, middle, and ending sounds in words like cat, hen, pig, fox, and bug. Next, ask the children if they can change a hen into a fox. Children begin by writing the word hen on a piece of paper. Then they change hen to pen, pen to pet, pet to pit and so on until they have changed a hen into a fox. The students correct their papers with the teacher. This activity helps the teacher know what each student knows about beginning, ending, and vowel sounds.

c. Implement a Making Words lesson. Refer to directions in week two activity c.

d. Continue coaching during independent reading time. Refer to direction in week 7, activity d.

I. Week 9

a. Practice then add five new high frequency words to the word wall. Refer to directions in week four, activity b.

b. Present a new "rounding up the rhymes" activity. Refer to directions in week five, activity c.

c. Implement a new Making Words lesson. Refer to directions in week two, activity c.

d. Coach children during independent reading time. Refer to direction in week seven, activity d.

J. Week 10

a. Practice then add five new high frequency words to the word wall. Refer to direction in week four, activity b.

b. Present a new "on-the-back" activity. Children work with word endings using word wall words. If a child knows word endings (-ed, -ing, -s) some of the words on the word wall will help them spell words that are longer but use the base (root) word that is up on the wall. For example, want is a word that children can add endings to. If children can spell the base word "want" then they can spell longer words using this word like wants, wanting, and wanted. This "on-the-back" activity can be done with other word wall words as well.

c. Implement a new Making Words lesson. Refer to directions in week two, activity c.

d. Coach children during independent reading time. Refer to directions in week seven, activity d.

K. Week 11

a. Practice then add five new high frequency words to the word wall. Refer to directions in week four, activity b.

b. Present a new "rounding up the rhymes" activity. Refer to directions in week five, activity c.

c. Implement a new Making Words lesson. Refer to directions in two, activity c.

d. Coach children during independent reading time. Refer to directions in week seven, activity d.

L. Week 12

a. Practice then add five new high frequency words to the word wall. Refer to direction in week four, activity b.

b. Present a new "guess the covered word" lesson. Refer to direction in week five, activity d.

c. Implement a new Making Words lesson. Refer to direction in week two, activity c.

d. Coach children during independent reading time. Refer to direction in week seven, activity d.

M. Week 13

a. Practice then add five new high frequency words to the word wall. Refer to direction in week four, activity b.

b. Introduce "reading/writing rhymes" activity. Children use patterns to decode and spell words. Generate a list of rhyming words using one pattern. Write some rhymes using these words and then read each other's rhymes.

c. Implement a new Making Words lesson. Refer to direction in week two, activity c.

d. Coach children during independent reading time. Refer to direction in week seven, activity d.

N. Week 14

a. Practice then add five new high frequency words to the word wall. Refer to direction in week four, activity b.

b. Present a new "on-the-back" activity. Children use word wall words to help them figure out new words. For example, the teacher reads the children a sentence he/she has generated. The teacher says something like "On top of the tree is a star." Students are then asked which word wall word would help them write the word star. The children look at the word wall and find car. Car will help them spell star. This "on-the-back" activity can be done with other word wall words as well.

c. Implement a new Making Words lesson. Refer to direction in week two, activity c.

d. Coach children during independent reading time. Refer to direction in week seven, activity d.

O. Week 15

a. Practice then add five new high frequency words to the word wall. Refer to direction in week four, activity b.

b. Present a new "guess the covered word" activity. Refer to direction in week five, activity d.

c. Implement a new Making Words lesson. Refer to direction in week two, activity c.

d. Coach children during independent reading time. Refer to direction in week seven, activity d.

P. Week 16

a. Final phoneme/grapheme checklist re-administered to students. (Appendix C)

b. Final blend/digraph checklist re-administered to students. (Appendix D)

c. Final reading inventories taken to find guided reading levels for individual students. (Appendix E)

Action Plan Outline B

A. Week 1

a. Teacher survey given to faculty members of grades 1-5. (Appendix A)

b. Parent survey sent home. (Appendix B)

c. Initial phoneme/grapheme checklist given one on one to individual students. (Appendix C)

B. Week 2

a. Introduce and practice letters: n, o, t, and p

b. Present new concepts: vowel, consonant capital, initial, echo, vibration, voiced, unvoiced, final, short vowel sound, breve, coding, blending, vowel rule, long vowel sound, macron, accent mark

c. Materials: spelling sound sheets, letter cards, picture cards, spelling cards, worksheets, review decks, rule charts, ball or pencil in sack, rubber bands, foam cups, letter tiles

C. Week 3

a. Introduce and practice letters: i, l, a, z

b. Present new concepts: twin consonants, blends

c. Materials: spelling sound sheets, letter cards, picture cards, spelling cards, worksheets, review decks, rule charts, letter tiles, apple in sack, zipper in sack, kids cards, assessment one

D. Week 4

a. Introduce and practice letters: s, d, f, and suffix –s

b. Present new concepts: medial, voice line, plural, root word, suffix, temporary, sight words, sentences

c. Materials: review decks, spelling sound sheets, letter tiles, letter cards, picture cards, spelling cards, worksheets, kid cards, assessment, sock in sack, gingersnaps, affix cards, readers, colored pencils, reader collection box, ball

E. Week 5

a. Introduce and practice letters: h, g, r, k

b. Present new concepts: sight word, phrase, apostrophe s, schwa

c. Materials: review decks, spelling sound sheets, letter tiles, letter cards, picture cards, spelling cards, worksheets, kid cards, assessment, wig in a sack, goggles in a sack, sight word card, sight word charts, readers, spelling list

F. Week 6

a. Introduce and practice: c, b, rule vc'lcv, and spelling with k and c

b. Present new concepts: syllables, k and c spelling rule, paired consonants, syllable division

c. Materials: review decks, spelling sound sheets, letter tiles, letter cards, picture cards, spelling cards, worksheets, kid cards, assessment, rule chart, carrot in a sack, sight word cards, spelling list, tokens, colored pencils, syllable division chart

G. Week 7

a. Introduce and practice: m, e, digraph ck, spelling with ck

b. Present new concepts: rhyming words, digraph, alphabetizing

c. Materials: review decks, spelling sound sheets, letter tiles, letter cards, picture cards, spelling cards, worksheets, kid cards, assessment, spelling list, review deck, lock in a sack, ball, rule card, tokens

H. Week 8

a. Introduce and practice: digraph th, ng, ee and suffix -ing, -ed

b. Present new concepts: compound words, contraction, suffix –ed

c. Materials: review decks, spelling sound sheets, letter tiles, letter cards, picture cards, spelling cards, worksheets, kid cards, assessment, sight word cards,

spelling list, feathers, symbols, affix card, ball, tokens, colored pencils, readers, spelling test

I. Week 9

a. Introduce and practice: spelling with final k, letter u, w, rule vc/cv'

b. Present new concepts: paragraph, vc/cv' syllable division

c. Materials: review decks, spelling sound sheets, letter tiles, letter cards, picture cards, spelling cards, worksheets, kid cards, assessment, activity sheets, sight word cards, readers, syllable division chart, spelling list, spelling test

J. Week 10

a. Introduce and practice: a consonant e, o consonant e, u consonant e, i consonant e, e consonant e, spelling with final ke

b. Present new concepts: silent e

c. Materials: review decks, spelling sound sheets, letter tiles, letter cards, picture cards, spelling cards, worksheets, kid cards, assessment, rule chart, spelling list, cube, readers, ball, dime, letter tiles, spelling test

K. Week 11

a. Introduce and practice: x, y, digraphs sh, oo

b. Materials: review decks, spelling sound sheets, letter tiles, letter cards, picture cards, spelling cards, worksheets, kid cards, assessment, spelling list, spelling test, yarn, readers

L. Week 12

a. Introduce and practice: j, v, floss rule, spelling with final c, ve

b. Present new concepts: floss words, irregular spelling words

c. Materials: review decks, spelling sound sheets, letter tiles, letter cards, picture cards, spelling cards, worksheets, kid cards, assessment, rule chart, irregular spelling booklets, readers, fig cookies

M. Week 13

a. Introduce and practice: final stable syllables -ble, -fle, -ple, -dle, -tle, -gle, -cle, -zle, -sle, -kle

b. Present new concepts: final stable syllable

c. Materials: review decks, spelling sound sheets, letter tiles, letter cards, picture cards, spelling cards, worksheets, kid cards, assessment, liquid bubbles, candles, readers, spelling list, spelling test, bottle

N. Week 14

a. Introduce and practice: vowel y, combination er, trigraph igh

b. Present new concepts: vowel y, trigraph

c. Materials: review decks, spelling sound sheets, letter tiles, letter cards, picture cards, spelling cards, worksheets, kid cards, assessment, spelling list, spelling test, readers

O. Week 15

a. Introduce and practice letters: compound words, suffixes -ly, -less, -ness, digraphs ai, ay

b. Present new concepts: coding compound words

c. Materials: review decks, spelling sound sheets, letter tiles, letter cards, picture cards, spelling cards, worksheets, kid cards, assessment, spelling list, spelling test, alphabet/accent deck, affix cards, sight word cards, readers

P. Week 16

a. Phoneme/Grapheme checklist re-administered. (Appendix C)

The commercial program (Saxon Phonics) used in Sites B and C has assessments built into the program. Every day the students review the sounds already learned previously. The teacher calls out a sound and the students write the letter that creates the sound. Every day a homework sheet that covers the material learned that day is taken home and completed and parents are required to initial the completed homework. After every fifth lesson there is a written and oral assessment given. The written assessment consists of a short spelling test where students spell words used during the five lessons. They then match letters to their keyword pictures. They will code several words with the symbols taught in class and then read and answer questions related to the paragraph they read. The oral assessments are short, individual interviews that take place after the written assessment. Each student is asked to read several words aloud to the teacher. They are also asked to identify initial, medial, and final sounds of words the teacher reads aloud. Students are also expected to be able to reproduce sounds certain letters make.

The commercial program comes with a variety of materials. Worksheets are included for the students. These will reinforce new concepts and also previously learned concepts. On the back of each worksheet is a page of homework. Students complete the homework at home and turn it in the next day. Letter Tiles are cardboard tiles that have the lower and upper case alphabet letters printed on them. As the students learn each letter sound they add a tile to their container. As they learn more letters they begin to put the individual tiles together to create words. Spelling Sound Sheets are used everyday to review letter sounds previously learned. As the teacher says a sound the student writes down the letter that the sound is associated

with. This gives the student the chance to continuously review and learn. Rule Charts have different rules featured on them, for example there is a syllable division chart that is put up after a lesson on syllabication is taught. These charts help the student remember what they have learned and can be used as a reference when a student finds a new word. Picture and Letter Cards make up the review deck of cards. Letter cards review each letter and help students learn the letter names and recognize the letters in print. The picture cards have illustrations that represent keywords, which are used to remind students of specific letter sounds they may have forgotten. Each student will receive fifty-two small booklets by the time the school year is finished. The students construct and color each booklet. The simple stories use only the words made from the letters and vowels taught at the time.

Methods of Assessment

In order to assess the effects of the intervention, teacher-made checklists covering phonetic sounds and their related symbols will be developed. (Appendix C) The checklists consist of 26 alphabet characters randomly scattered on the page. Each student will be asked to identify each letter name and the letter sound that corresponds with the letter. Students will also be tested on their knowledge of vowel sounds, consonant digraphs, and blends. Each student will be asked to identify the sounds that the digraphs and blends will make (Appendix D).

In addition, commercially- and teacher-made assessments will be administered to test retention. These assessments will be given every fifth day of instruction. They assess a students' retention and understanding of the phonics skills previously covered and taught. Each student will be required to spell words, match sounds with pictures, and identify letters and their corresponding sounds. Assessments are part of the Saxon Phonics program.

Individual student conferences and informal teacher observations will also be held as part of the assessment process. In the student /teacher conferences the student will be asked to demonstrate knowledge of letter and sound recognition. This is done as part of the commercial phonics program. Informal assessments will also be done while observing students doing phonics work. All observations will be recorded in the daily log. (Appendix F)

A daily log will be kept to document the successes, defined as, students comprehending the material, students observed using the skills taught in the program, and students willingness to learn. Skills and ideas from the program that were more difficult to teach will also be recorded in the log. (Appendix F)

CHAPTER 4

PROJECT RESULTS

Historical Description of the Intervention

The objective of this project was to advance first and second grade students' ability to decode and transfer words in reading and spelling. This was measured by keeping a checklist and administering assessments, both commercial and teacher-made. In order to accomplish the project objective, the following processes were necessary:

1. Collecting and assessing student data, using teacher-made checklists, commercially-made assessments, and teacher-made assessments
2. Teaching lessons in phonics
3. Collecting data from teacher surveys regarding students' phonetic knowledge
4. Keeping a weekly log stating accomplishments and setbacks
5. Observing students in informal situations

In Site A, phonics was taught through patterns using Cunningham and Hall's Month by Month Phonics resource manual. Children looked at clusters of letters and considered the patterns they knew. Children learned how to use patterns in words they knew how to decode and then spell hundreds of other words. The activities in the action plan at Site A provided ways to help children develop a wealth of words they

could spell instantly. The children learned to read and spell high-frequency words and learned the patterns, which allowed them to decode and spell many other words.

The first 10 minutes of instruction were usually given to reviewing the Word Wall words. The remaining 15-25 minutes were given to an activity which helped the children learn to decode and spell. A variety of activities were used on different days. Some of the activities included "Rounding up the Rhymes," "Making Words," "Guess the Covered Word," "Reading/Writing Rhymes." and "Changing a Hen to a Fox." Extra reading at home and school helped this program to be successful.

The schedule of researcher A was interrupted with extra school activities, such as field trips, assemblies, teacher meetings, and holiday activities. Two children moved away during the course of the intervention. Deviations from the action plan at Site A occurred somewhat frequently. Lessons were made up when possible.

Sites B and C adopted a commercial phonics program called Saxon Phonics. Vowels were introduced as short (breve) and long (macron). Children used these symbols and words daily to decipher the vowel sounds in words. Consonants were introduced as individual sounds, blends, and digraphs. Students were tested daily on individual sounds. Worksheets were used daily. Students completed one side of the worksheet together with the teacher guiding the students in class. The other side was done as homework with parental help. The worksheet was returned completed the next day.

Spelling sound sheets were worksheets that were handed out daily and not turned in. They were used to review letter sounds previously learned. The teacher made the

sound of a given letter, the children echoed the sound, then orally named the letter, and finally they wrote the letter on the given sound sheet.

Spelling cards were used in correlation with the sound sheets. The sounds that the teacher read to the students were read off of these cards. Letter cards with individual letters were held up daily in random order. The cards that were held up had letters the students had previously learned. As the card was raised up, the students simply called out the name of the letter. Picture cards were also used daily. These were individual cards which contained a letter and a picture that represented that letter sound. The students would say, for example, "igloo 'i' open 'o', ostrich 'o', apple 'a', acorn 'a', lock 'ck', sheep 'ee', wagon 'w'," etc.

Sight word cards were cards that contained words that did not follow any prescribed phonetic rules. The given sight words were memorized by the students. They were also reviewed daily. Sight word charts were large charts that were posted only for reference. On these charts were sight words that had been introduced and reviewed. They were used throughout the year.

Rule charts were 8" by 11" poster boards that had individually posted rules and examples. They could be posted as lessons progressed. Letter tiles were small cardboard squares that had a capital and lowercase letter on them. There were 26 of these one-inch squares. Students used them to spell and manipulate words daily. Affix cards were similar to the letter cards on which suffixes and prefixes were introduced. They were used daily, following letter cards.

Readers were "3 by 3" paper books that the students separated page by page. They assembled the pages in sequence and then colored them. They read these to

themselves, silently or orally. These readers contained only controlled vocabulary from prior lessons. Comprehension of the reader was orally tested by discussing the stories and by using recall and prediction. Spelling lists, which contained 10 to 12 words, were given weekly. These words were used frequently in daily lessons. Students were formally tested on these spelling words each week.

Assessments occurred every fifth lesson. The assessments included spelling words, coding words, and matching sounds with their corresponding keywords. They also included paragraphs that were silently read by the student and then followed by two sentences which contained fill in the blank sentences. After that, the children had an individual oral assessment with the teacher. Irregular spelling books contained words that did not follow any phonetic rules.

In Site B, the intervention went as planned. The students reviewed daily lessons previously taught. They reviewed all phonics sounds learned. After a review, a new lesson was presented. The lesson always followed the same format with one side of a worksheet done in class and the other side done at home with parents. The students seemed to be comfortable working with the program. The program was scripted for the teacher to follow. There were many opportunities provided in which mastery could be achieved in learning to spell, decoding, reading paragraphs, and demonstrating comprehension by responding to short answer questions.

The daily worksheets and homework reflected the format of given assessments. The assessments were provided orally, one on one, which helped the teacher monitor the children's successes. The colorful posters with pictures and symbols, the 26 8" by 11" visuals for the alphabet, and the 3" by 5" review decks were consistent aids to

which the children referred when reading and writing by themselves. The spelling tests contained words from the lessons taught. These tests were printed with visual cues for the students. They had a line for each letter in the spelling word.

In Site C, the intervention went as planned. The students reviewed daily lessons taught. They reviewed the phonic sounds learned. The lesson always followed the same format. One side of a worksheet was done in class and the other side was done at home with parents. The students were observed as being comfortable with the program. The program was scripted for the teacher to follow. There were many opportunities provided in which mastery could be achieved in learning to spell, decode, read paragraphs, and demonstrate comprehension by responding to short answer questions. The daily worksheets and homework reflected the format of given assessments. The assessments were given as a written test and oral test. The oral test was given, one on one, which helped the teacher monitor the student's successes. The sight word posters, the review decks, and posters stating the phonics rules were consistent aids that the students referred to when working independently. The spelling tests contained words from the lessons taught. The paper for the spelling tests had visual clues for the students. Each spelling paper had a line for each letter in the spelling word.

There were several deviations from the plan. The first one was school holidays. This set the class behind a day in the weekly action plan. Reviewing the sounds became tedious and time consuming during the daily lesson, and was done twice a week. Also, the card games were not played during the lessons because of the time it

took to teach each lesson. Each lesson was made up at a later date or taught in the afternoon instead of the morning.

Presentation and Analysis of Results

In order to assess the effects of an increased emphasis on phonetic instruction, assessments of phonetic skills were maintained throughout the intervention. The pre-intervention data took place between September 1 and September 15, 2001. The post-intervention data collection process took place between December 21 and December 28, 2001. Phonics skills were assessed post-intervention and compared to those assessed pre-intervention. Results then were interpreted.

In Site A, alphabet letter and alphabet sound checklists were administered pre and post intervention. (Appendix C) Of the 18 children originally tested, only 16 took part in the post-assessment due to a change in schools. Researcher A tested each child on phoneme/grapheme awareness. The researcher wanted to see how well the students knew the letter names and their corresponding sounds. The results were compared to those at pre-intervention. Researcher A first asked the student to name the letters of the alphabet and then asked him to produce the sounds that each letter made. This testing continued until each letter name and sound was assessed. Comparisons of the results of the phoneme/grapheme checklists are represented in Figure 10.

Figure 10

Comparison of Results of Phoneme/Grapheme Checklists, Pre- and Post-Intervention

Students - Site A	Pre-intervention Letter Name Percent Correct	Post-intervention Letter Name Percent Correct	Pre-intervention Letter Sound Percent Correct	Post-intervention Letter Sound Percent Correct
1	100	100	77	88
2	100	100	96	100
3	100	100	77	96
4	100	100	88	88
5	100	100	96	100
6	100	100	96	92
7	100	100	100	100
8	100	100	96	100
9	100	100	88	88
10	100	100	100	100
11	100	100	92	96
12	100	100	88	100
13	96	100	88	96
14	100	100	96	100
15	100	100	96	88
16	100	100	92	100
Mean	99.75	100	91.63	95.75
Standard Deviation	0.97	0	6.78	4.99

Researcher A found that 99.7% of the names of alphabet letters could be pronounced by her second grade students at the beginning of the intervention with a SD of 0.97. By the end of the intervention, 100% of her second grade students knew the names of all alphabet letters with a SD of 0. The T-value equaled 0.17. That showed that there was not a significant increase in letter recognition. She also found that at the beginning of the intervention her students could produce the sounds that alphabet letters made 92% of the time with a SD of 6.78. By the end of the

intervention, her second grade students could produce the sounds of alphabet letters 96% of the time with a SD of 4.99. The T-value equaled 0.01. That shows that there was a significant increase in letter sound recognition.

Researcher A then assessed the targeted students on their awareness of blends and digraphs by administering the blend/digraph checklist found in Appendix D. The researcher was curious to know how well the intervention program taught students to hear blends and digraphs. This assessment was first administered in week one of the intervention and then again in week 16. Researcher A asked the students to look at the blend or digraph and produce the sound it made. This testing continued until each blend and digraph in Appendix D was assessed. Comparisons of the results of the blend/digraph checklists are represented in Figures 11 and 12.

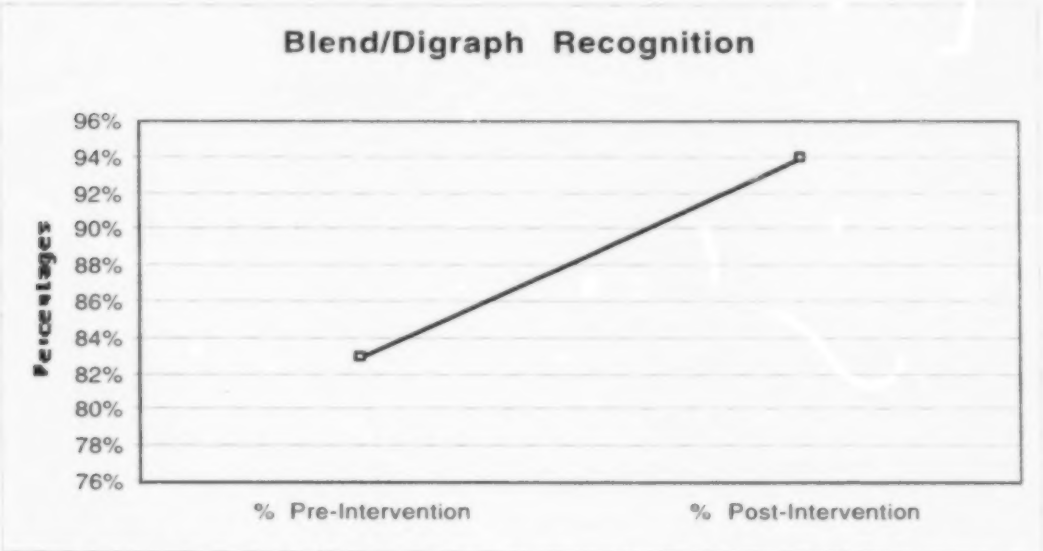
Figure 11

Comparison of Blend/Digraph Checklists, Pre-and Post-Intervention

Students - Site A	**Pre-intervention Blends/Digraphs Percent Correct**	**Post-intervention Blends/Digraphs Percent Correct**
1	42	83
2	92	94
3	83	92
4	75	94
5	92	100
6	78	86
7	100	97
8	92	92
9	86	89
10	94	100
11	100	97
12	89	89
13	42	92
14	81	100
15	86	94
16	94	94
Mean	82.88	93.31
Standard Deviation	16.90	4.78

Figure 12

Comparison of Blend/Digraph Checklists, Pre- and Post-Intervention



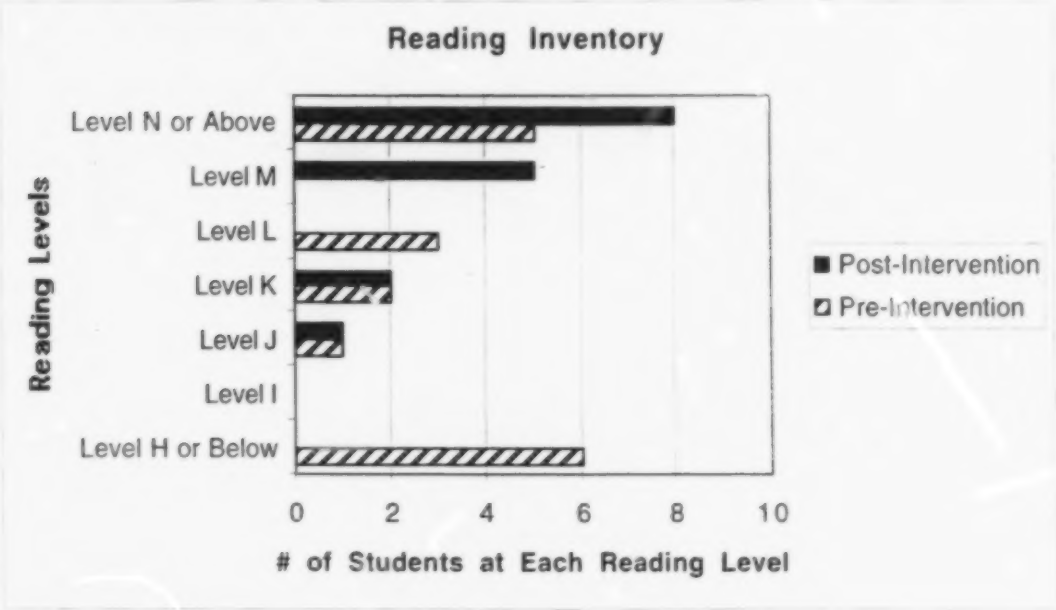
Researcher A found that at the beginning of the intervention her students could sound out 83% of the blends and digraphs tested with a SD of 16.90. By the end of the intervention, 93% of the sounds blends and digraphs make could be produced by her second grade students with a SD of 4.78. The T-value is 0.008. That shows that there was a significant increase in recognizing and sounding out blends and digraphs.

Finally, researcher A gave one-on-one informal reading inventories to determine the independent reading levels of each of her students. (Appendix E) At the beginning of second grade, students should ideally be reading independently at Guided Reading Level I, and by the end of second grade, most students should be reading independently at Guided Reading Level M. Researcher A asked each child to read a leveled book. If the book was too difficult, the researcher asked the child to read at a lower reading level. If the book was too easy the researcher asked the child to read at a higher reading level. The researcher then determined which reading level was

appropriate for independent reading by the child. These reading assessments were given at the beginning of week one of the intervention period and then again at the end of week sixteen. The results of the reading inventories are represented in Figure 13.

Figure 13

Results of Reading Inventories, Pre- and Post-Intervention



Of the 16 students assessed at the beginning of the intervention, six students were reading below grade level, seven students were reading at grade level and five students were reading above grade level. By the end of the intervention, no students were reading below grade level, eight students were reading at grade level and eight students were reading above grade level.

In Site B, alphabet letter and alphabet sound checklists were administered pre and post intervention. (Appendix C) Researcher B tested each child on phoneme/grapheme awareness. The researcher wanted to see how well the students

knew the letter names and corresponding sounds. Results were compared to the pre-intervention checklists. Researcher B first asked the student to randomly identify the letters of the alphabet and then asked the student to produce the sounds each letter made. This assessment continued until each letter and sound was assessed. Comparisons of the results of the phoneme/grapheme checklists are represented in figure 14.

Figure 14

Comparison of Results of Phoneme/Grapheme Checklists, Pre- and Post-Intervention

Students - Site B	**Pre-intervention Letter Name Percent Correct**	**Post-intervention Letter Name Percent Correct**	**Pre-intervention Letter Sound Percent Correct**	**Post-intervention Letter Sound Percent Correct**
1	96	100	96	100
2	19	96	0	96
3	100	100	100	100
4	100	100	69	100
5	100	100	92	100
6	100	100	73	100
7	88	100	54	96
8	96	100	35	100
9	100	100	85	100
10	100	100	96	100
Mean	89.9	99.6	70	99.2
Standard Deviation	23.91	1.2	30.58	1.6

Researcher B found that 89.9% of the names of alphabet letters could be pronounced by her first grade students at the beginning of the intervention with a SD of 23.91. By the end of the intervention, 99.6% of her first grade students knew the names of all alphabet letters with a SD of 1.2. The T-value equaled 0.12. That

showed there was a significant increase in letter recognition. She also found that at the beginning of the intervention her students could produce the sounds that alphabet letters made 70% of the time with a SD of 30.58. By the end of the intervention, her first grade students could produce the sounds of alphabet letters 99.2% of the time with a SD of 1.6. The T-value equaled 0.01. That showed there was a significant increase in letter sound recognition.

Researcher B administered nine assessments to 10 students. At the conclusion of completing five lessons each student was given a written and oral assessment. The written assessment consisted of spelling five words, coding five words, matching pictures and corresponding sounds, matching consonant blends, reading a several sentence story and answering questions about the story. The oral assessment consisted of the student reading words to the researcher and identifying letter sounds. Each week the assessments became consistently challenging. Students struggled with reading paragraphs and questions as they both increased in size and difficulty. Thus, the scores show a slight decline in certain assessments as shown in Figures 15 and 16.

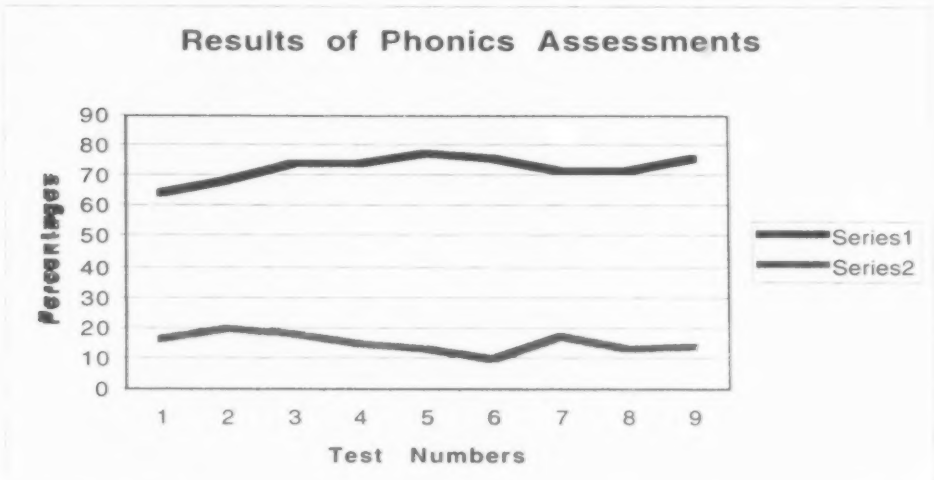
Figure 15

Results of the Phonics Programs Weekly Assessments.

Students	Test 1	Test 2	Test 3	Test 4	Test 5	Test 6	Test 7	Test 8	Test 9
1	52%	44%	44%	64%	56%	56%	52%	56%	64%
2	76%	92%	100	84%	88%	84%	84%	84%	100 %
3	60%	60%	48%	68%	56%	68%	32%	48%	52%
4	52%	68%	84%	88%	92%	84%	84%	64%	76%
5	40%	56%	56%	90%	76%	72%	72%	80%	84%
6	48%	32%	72%	50%	72%	72%	76%	70%	88%
7	88%	88%	92%	88%	68%	88%	76%	68%	76%
8	80%	80%	76%	100	92%	88%	92%	92%	60%
9	88%	76%	84%	66%	88%	76%	64%	76%	72%
10	60%	92%	88%	76%	88%	72%	84%	84%	88%
Mean	64%	69%	74%	74%	78%	76%	72%	72%	76%
Standard Deviation	16.4	19.6	18.2	14.5	13.4	17.1	17.1	13	13.9

Figure 16

Results of the Phonics Programs Weekly Assessments.



There was consistent retention of material learned as shown in Figures 15 and 16. Even after the scores declined slightly, they began to again improve. There were grades ranging from 100% to 32% on the assessments.

In Site C alphabet letter and alphabet sound checklists were administered pre and post intervention. (Appendix C) Researcher C tested each child on phoneme/grapheme awareness. The researcher wanted to see how well the students knew the letter names and corresponding sounds. Results were compared to the pre-intervention checklists. Researcher C first asked the student to randomly identify the letters of the alphabet and then asked the student to produce the sounds each letter made. This assessment continued until each letter and sound was assessed. Comparisons of the results of the phoneme/grapheme checklists are represented in figure 17.

Figure 17

Comparison of Results of Phoneme/Grapheme Checklists, Pre- and Post-Intervention

Students - Site C	Pre-intervention Letter Name Percent Correct	Post-intervention Letter Name Percent Correct	Pre-intervention Letter Sound Percent Correct	Post-intervention Letter Sound Percent Correct
1	61	100	42	81
2	100	100	100	100
3	100	100	73	100
4	92	100	85	100
5	61	100	58	100
6	100	100	85	100
7	100	100	85	100
8	92	100	54	100
9	100	100	31	92
10	100	100	100	100
Mean	90.6	100	71.3	97.3
Standard Deviation	15.12	0	22.74	5.93

Researcher C found that 91% of the names of alphabet letters could be pronounced by her first grade students at the beginning of the intervention with a SD of 15.12. By the end of the intervention, 100% of her first graders knew the names of all alphabet letters with a SD of 0. The T-value equaled 0.03. That showed that there was not a significant increase in letter recognition. She also found that at the beginning of the intervention her students could produce the sounds that alphabet letters made 71% of the time with a SD of 22.74. By the end of the intervention, her first grade students could produce the sounds of alphabet letters 97.3% of the time with a SD of 5.93. The T-value equaled 0.002. That showed that there was a significant increase in letter sound recognition.

Researcher C administered nine assessments to 10 students. At the conclusion of completing five lessons, each student was given a written and oral assessment. The written assessment consisted of spelling five words, coding five words, matching pictures and corresponding sounds, matching consonant blends, reading a several sentence story and answering questions about the story. The oral assessment consisted of the student reading words to the researcher and identifying letter sounds. Each week the assessments became consistently challenging. Students struggled with reading paragraphs and questions as they both increased in size and difficulty. Thus, the scores showed a slight decline in certain assessments as shown in Figures 18 and 19.

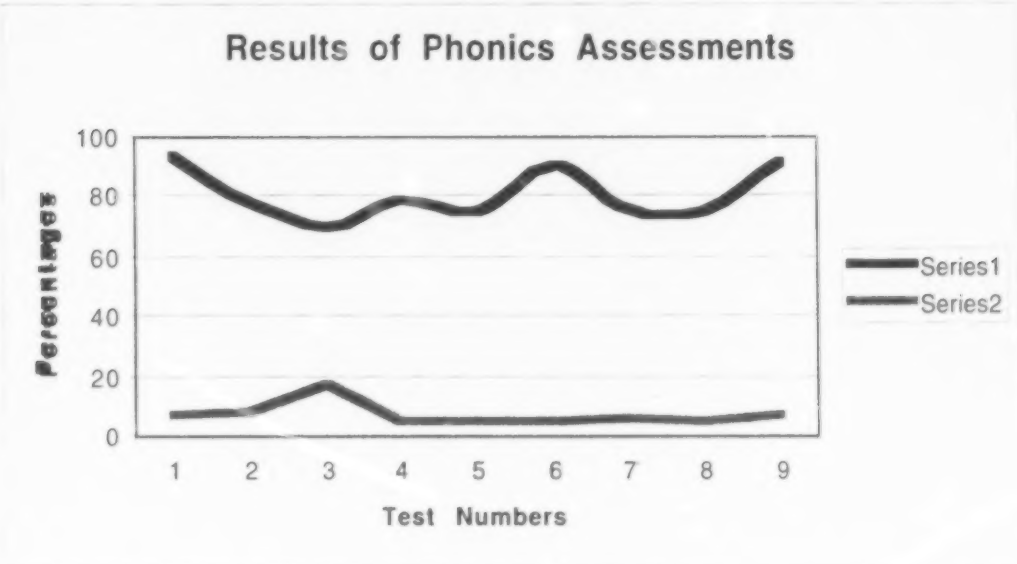
Figure 18

Results of the Phonics Programs Weekly Assessments.

Students	**Test 1**	**Test 2**	**Test 3**	**Test 4**	**Test 5**	**Test 6**	**Test 7**	**Test 8**	**Test 9**
1	88%	80%	60%	75%	76%	96%	84%	72%	84%
2	100	84%	88%	75%	80%	88%	84%	84%	100
3	92%	80%	40%	79%	68%	92%	72%	72%	92%
4	100	76%	76%	79%	68%	96%	72%	72%	80%
5	90%	56%	40%	75%	80%	88%	68%	68%	92%
6	100	80%	80%	82%	80%	88%	80%	80%	92%
7	100	84%	84%	80%	76%	92%	72%	72%	92%
8	92%	84%	84%	93%	72%	92%	72%	72%	100
9	76%	72%	68%	80%	72%	80%	76%	76%	84%
10	96%	84%	84%	75%	84%	100	84%	84%	100
Mean	93%	78%	70%	79%	76%	91%	76%	75%	92%
Standard Deviation	7.3	8.2	17.2	5.2	5.2	5.3	5.8	5.3	6.8

Figure 19

Results of the Phonics Programs Weekly Assessments.



There was consistent retention of material learned as shown in Figures 18 and 19. Even after the scores declined slightly they began to increase again. There were grades ranging from 56% to 100% on the assessments.

Conclusions and Recommendations

Based on the presentation and analysis of data, the phonics programs implemented showed improvement in phonetic skills, which increased students' ability to decode words in reading and spelling.

In Sites A, B, and C, letter recognition was tested pre and post intervention. Letter name recognition did not show a significant increase in Sites A and C, due to the fact that most students entered these classrooms knowing the names of the letters of the alphabet. However, in Site B, data showed a significant increase in letter recognition.

By the end of the intervention, 99.6% of all students included in the intervention knew the names of letters in the alphabet.

Researchers A, B, and C then tested letter sound recognition pre and post intervention. In Sites A, B, and C, data showed a significant increase in sound recognition. By the end of the intervention, 97.4% of all students included in the intervention knew the basic sounds of alphabet letters.

Researcher A tested her second grade students on their knowledge of consonant digraphs and blends pre and post intervention. The data taken showed a significant increase in students' ability to pronounce blends and digraphs. By the end of the intervention, the students knew 93% of the sounds blends and digraphs make.

Researcher A tested her students on reading ability pre and post intervention. By the end of the intervention, all of her students were reading at or above grade level. Researcher A believes that her phonics intervention program helped students become better readers.

Researchers B and C collected data on the assessments that went with their commercial phonics program. Their data showed a consistent and gradual increase in the scores following each assessment. Test scores dropped slightly when the stories on the assessments increased in difficulty and the number of questions doubled. However, after the students acquired more skills they were able to master the more difficult material and seemed less apprehensive with each assessment. This confidence in and of itself, on the part of the students, showed how many skills the students had learned.

Researchers B and C noticed a significant increase in their first graders' ability to produce the sounds of alphabet letters. Students actively used the phonetic charts and

coded independently when reading unfamiliar words. They learned phonetic skills, using the Saxon Phonics Program, and referred back to the wall charts, thus showing independent learning. Students were able to transfer the skills they learned by reading any type of book - basal reader, science book, or trade book. When it came to problem solving in math, reading the story problem was no longer an issue. Students could actively read the story problem and solve it. Researchers B and C noticed their students becoming enthusiastic about reading and even welcoming challenges with unfamiliar words.

Researchers B and C recognized that another benefit of this program was that it was parent/student friendly. The homework was consistent with the daily lesson learned. This was because the worksheet and homework were back to back on the same sheet of paper. The parent could then see what the student had learned in class and could offer assistance when needed. The new concept was boldly printed at the top of each new lesson. This also helped parents stay abreast of their child's progress in learning to read.

Researchers B and C were pleased with the outcomes of the interventions. However, there were faults with the program. In Sites B and C, each teacher noticed that certain lessons could not be completed in the recommended time. Therefore, those lessons had to be covered in two days instead of one. Each lesson had a built in review, which became lengthy as the weeks ensued, and the children became bored as the lessons became redundant. The 3" x 3" paper story books that were a part of the program were not of high interest, although the children loved assembling and coloring them. The book idea was great; however, the stories needed to have some

theme or be of higher interest. The assessments that were given to the students in Sites B and C became too difficult for the students, because the difficulty of the assessments increased before the skills had been mastered by the majority of the students. Once the skills were mastered, the students became successful in completing the assessments. The tests also suddenly increased in length and many children were not equipped to handle the assessments, as they were just beginning to read.

In Sites B and C, both researchers felt that a smaller group would have benefited better than a larger group, due to the fact that the children could get individual attention when needed. Site B had 32 children compared to Site C, which had 11. In Site C, children mastered daily lessons with a higher success rate than Site B. Another factor that may have delayed progress for some of the children in Site B was the fact that many children in Site B came from a non -English speaking background. Thus, the parents, who spoke only in their native tongue, were not able to help their children with the daily homework. The teacher in Site B found that some children who had come from a half-day kindergarten program did not fare as well as those who had come from a full-day kindergarten program or had some prior school experience.

Researchers A, B and C found themselves constantly thinking about how they could improve their students' reading skills. The two phonics programs used in the intervention benefited students' at all three sites. After the intervention, students of the targeted first and second grade classes demonstrated a clear knowledge of the relationship between phonemes and their corresponding graphemes. The intervention caused students to become fluent and independent readers who were excited about the reading process.

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Appendices

Appendix A
Teacher Survey

Teacher Survey

Please complete the following questions about your students who struggle with reading. Feel free to elaborate.

1. Generally, How many years below grade level are your struggling readers?
   a. one year
   b. two years
   c. three years or more
   d. at grade level

2. Are the majority of your students sight readers or phonetic readers?
   a. sight readers (immediate recognition of words learned through memorization)
   b. phonetic readers (has skills necessary to decode any word)

3. What do these students struggle with the **MOST** in reading?
   a. letter/sound recognition
   b. contextual clues
   c. comprehension
   d. fluency

4. Can your struggling readers attack new words by decoding?
   a. all of the time
   b. most of the time
   c. rarely
   d. never

5. What strategies do you observe your students using the **MOST** in reading?
   a. sounding out
   b. contextual clues
   c. comprehension
   d. picture clues

6. Do you feel your struggling readers mostly…
   a. decode letter by letter (c-a-t)
   b. decode using word parts (walk-ing / lo-tion)
   c. sight read -or-
   d. just ask for help

7. What skill(s) do you feel your struggling students lack when it comes to reading?

Appendix B
Parent Letter

Welcome back to a new school year! In an attempt to enhance your child's school experience, please take a moment to fill out the survey below. This survey will remain confidential.

Please check the response which best applies to your child.

Survey Questions	all of the time	most of the time	sometimes	seldom
Does your child enjoy reading?				
How frequently do you read to your child?				
How often does your child pick up a book of his/her own choosing?				
How often do you and your child read together?				
Can your child name the letters in the alphabet?				
Can your child imitate the sound that each consonant letter of the alphabet makes?				
Can your child imitate the sound that each vowel letter of the alphabet makes?				
Do you think your child is a strong reader?				

Appendix B
Parent Letter
(Continued)

Please complete the following questions about your child:

1. What goals do you have for your child?

2. What are your child's greatest strengths?

3. What things motivate your child?

4. What are your child's activities and interests outside of school?

Student Name _____ Date _____

Appendix C
Phoneme/Grapheme Checklist

Student _____ Teacher _____ Date _____

Phoneme/Grapheme Checklist

X = Mastered Skill
O = Skill not acquired

	Alphabet Letter Name	Alphabet Letter Sound
A		
B		
C		
D		
E		
F		
G		
H		
I		
J		
K		
L		
M		
N		
O		
P		
Q		
R		
S		
T		
U		
V		
W		
X		
Y		
Z		

Appendix C
Phoneme/Grapheme Checklist
(Continued)

Alphabet Letters

D H L G C T K V X O S A J E Z W M B F N Q R U P Y I

Appendix D
Blend/Digraph Checklist - Site A

Student _____ Teacher _____ Date _____

Blend/Digraph Checklist

X = Mastered Skill
O = Skill not acquired

	Letter(s) Sound	Comments
bl		
br		
c (city)		
ch		
cl		
cr		
dr		
fl		
fr		
g (giant)		
gl		
gr		
pl		
pr		
sc		
sh		
sk		
sl		
sm		
sn		
sp		
st		
str		
sw		
th		
thr		

Appendix D
Blend/Digraph Checklist – Site A
(Continued)

Student _____ Teacher _____ Date _____

Blend/Digraph Checklist

X = Mastered Skill
O = Skill not acquired

	Letter(s) Sound	Comments
tr		
tw		
wh		
wr		
-gh		
-ph		
-es		
-ing		
-ed		
-er		

Guided Reading Levels
Teacher:_____

	STUDENT	AUGUST	NOVEMBER	MARCH	JUNE
1					
2					
3					
4					
5					
6					
7					
8					
9					
10					
11					
12					
13					
14					
15					
16					
17					
18					
19					
20					
21					
22					
23					

Appendix F
Daily Log

Week of

Actions Taken:

Reflection:

PLUSES (+)	MINUSES (-)	INTERESTING (?)